

## 2015 Farmers' Market Blog Posts

### **October 30, 2015 – Check milk and eggs off your grocery list, too**

Cream-line milk, goat cheese and eggs of every hue—shoppers can find a lot more than vegetables at the Old Town Alexandria Farmers Market. We've welcomed a growing number of vendors who are not only producing local food but also turning that food into high-value products like cheese and ice cream.

Chocolate milk is on the market menu, too, from Coulter Farms (including personal-sized bottles that can easily disappear before you finish making the rounds).

Coulter Farms offers certified organic and grass-fed dairy products alongside its meat. Along with cream-line milk, the family farm sells fresh and aged cheeses, yogurt and ice cream, all made with milk from the family's cows. "It keeps us busy," Kinley Coulter says.

The Coulters are also busy at the market, offering samples of some 16 different types of cheeses, from raw milk-based sharps to Camembert.

Then there are the farm-fresh eggs. Coulter Farms sells them, laid by free-range chickens, as does Lamb's Quarter and a handful of other farms at the market.

"The eggs are just what you want: farm fresh and delicious, with a nice yolk and creamy white," one customer wrote about the eggs he buys most weeks from Lamb's Quarter, which also sells produce and meat.

What more could you want from your local market?

### **July 2, 2015 – A 'menagerie' of a farm at The Lamb's Quarter**

The Bourne family has been farming in Southern Calvert County, Maryland, since the late 1600s. And, as you might have guessed, things have changed a lot since then. Instead of tobacco, The Lamb's Quarter farm now focuses on today's crave-worthy product: pasture-based meats and eggs.

The 145-acre farm located about 30 miles from the market started raising chickens for meat and eggs around 2001. James "Jim" Bourne had returned to the family farm from a career in law enforcement several years before, but, after rethinking the food his family was eating, he began to rethink what the farm was growing, too.

“Slowly, we added pork onto that, and then sheep,” Bourne said of the chickens and cattle the farm was raising at the time. Now, “it’s kind of a menagerie.”

The farm focuses on “clean meat” that is free of antibiotics and artificial hormones from animals that spend time in the pastures. Customers can find Angus beef, pork, lamb, chicken, eggs and a spread of sausages at the farm’s market stand. The stand, often run by Bourne’s daughters, Hannah and Amanda, also sells cheese from an Amish dairy in St. Mary’s County. But the farm’s most popular product is the pork sausage, flavored by its butcher: English banger, cracked pepper, bratwurst, Andouille, sweet Italian, spicy Italian, sundried tomato basil, spicy chorizo and sage.

“We sell a lot of eggs, too,” Bourne said, “But, right now, demand for our sausage is up there.”

The farm offers a subscription-based program that customers can pay into at the beginning of the year and debit from as they pick up products at market each week. The Lamb’s Quarter formerly offered a vegetable subscription as well but recently scaled back to focus solely on meat.

The most frequently asked question he fields? How to thaw the meat, which is sold frozen at market. “If it’s a pound or less, you can thaw it in water,” Bourne says. “Otherwise, put it in the refrigerator.”

[www.thelambsquarter.com](http://www.thelambsquarter.com)

## **June 26, 2015 - The Farmstead of Charlotte Hall**

The Farmstead of Charlotte Hall is a small, diversified farm located in Charles County, Southern Maryland, where the Chesapeake Bay and Patuxent River govern the climate. Owners, Tony and Lori Brown, started organic gardening in the 1980s and have been vendors at the Old Town Farmer’s Market for more than 20 years. Both came from urban backgrounds and left city jobs to make a living on their micro farm. They opted to stay small scale using innovative growing practices without using larger farm equipment.

Since the 1980’s, the Brown’s approach to growing produce is to feed the soil using compost, cover crops, rock powders, and organic mulch; they feel this approach produces the freshest, most nutritious vegetables while improving the land and quality of life. They use

biologically intensive cropping methods with raised beds, efficient spacing and planting density, and plant as many succession crops as possible.

Lori and Tony focus on growing better instead of bigger and use organic methods to build the soil to feed their plants. Talking with customers at the market is the highlight of their week and they enjoy sharing information about their organic growing methods and ways to cook their delicious vegetables.

Stop by Charlotte Hall's booth at the northeast corner of the market on Fairfax Street and pick up some of their vegetables and a recipe too!

<http://farmsteadgardens.com/index.html>

### **May 23, 2015 - Coulter Farms**

Standing at one end of the Coulter family's farm stand, it appears to be matched in vastness only by the 325 acres in the ridge valley of Honey Grove, PA, which the farm calls home. Pennsylvania-certified organic milk and eggs at one end of the table give way to 16 different varieties of cheese, displayed in boxes ready for sampling, at the other — and that's not to count the half-dozen coolers brimming with cuts of beef, pork and lamb.

"It's a handful," says Kinley Coulter, whose seven children aged 9 months to 19 years help with the operation, bottling milk, making cheese and preparing products each week for the farmers market. "The 9-month-old isn't all that involved," he adds.

The family started farming for wholesale markets in 1999 but transitioned to local markets several years ago. After settling on an operation that prizes what's best for the land, the animals and customers, Coulter Farms became certified as organic.

The Coulters now raise about 100 beef cows, 150 lambs and 20 pigs each year, allowing their ruminants to drink mother's milk and eat grass as they rotate throughout the fields to improve soil health.

"We practice truly organic and biodynamic farming, relying exclusively on biological systems to achieve excellence in our soils," Coulter writes of the farm.

The farm's animals are humanely slaughtered and their meat is quickly frozen for maximum quality and longevity, sold as familiar cuts ready for the home cook. The laying hens whose eggs the Coulters sell are also free-range.

On top of that, the Coulters find time to transform some of their Jersey cows' milk into cheese. The farm's creamery produces both pasteurized and raw cheeses, which are fermented at least 60 days.

"We get asked a lot whether we make the cheese," Coulter says with a grin. "It keeps us busy." If that weren't enough, the family also sells raw honey.

[www.CoulterFarms.net](http://www.CoulterFarms.net)

### **May 9, 2015 - Old Town Farmers' Market Plant Vendors**

Spring has (finally) sprung—and the Old Town Farmers' Market is one of the best places to glean inspiration for what you can plant at home. Come April and May, the market is teeming with fresh-cut flowers and vendors who can help you understand the difference between the daffodils and narcissuses already cropping up in your neighborhood. Their offerings are ideal for a Mother's Day bouquet or simply to grace your weekly dinner table.

For those with slightly greener thumbs, spring means getting the garden started with plants from vendors like Blue Ridge Botanicals. Growing herbs from starters means you don't have to wait for seeds to sprout to start clipping fresh herbs for the kitchen. These plants also give beginning growers a head start on herb health since they are coaxed from seeds with careful supervision in local greenhouses.

If you don't even think about planting until halfway through spring, the starters are good for that, too. All you need to get them growing is a spot—a sturdy pot or plot of ground will do—and good soil. Consider purchasing potting soil if you're not sure about the quality your backyard has to offer.

When it comes to herbs, growers suggest choosing those that you'll get the most use out of in the kitchen. One of the most popular herbs is basil, but it's also among the hardest to keep alive. That's partly because many people plant the herb in March when they should wait until Mother's Day.

For herbs that are easy to grow and useful in as many recipes, consider parsley, chives, thyme and oregano. This year, the hardest part of planting might be picking which ones to grow.

At Old Town Farmers' Market, Blue Ridge Botanicals and Middleway Farm offer a dozen varieties of basil and as many of mint and thyme, too. Middleway Farm, Montoya's Produce, Diaz Farm, and Lopez Farm sell plant starts (such as basil and tomatoes).